

# The Weather Whisper

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

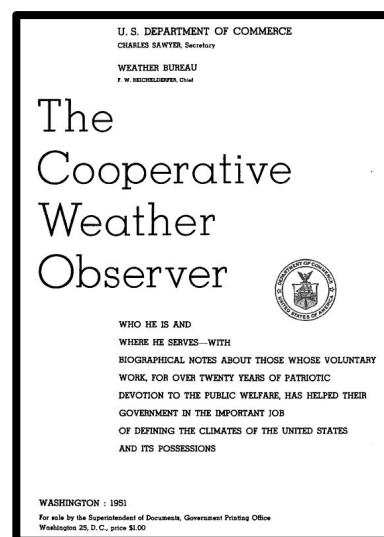
- Late November Wintry System
- Staff Spotlight - Meet Allan

## Ralph B. Slippy, Waterloo Observer 1911-1950

Andrew Ansorge, Lead Meteorologist

Before automated weather observing systems became widespread in the 1990s, observations were taken by human observers. For Waterloo, Iowa, observations were taken at the Waterloo Airport from 1950 until the 1990s, primarily by the National Weather Service. Before that time, only two civic-minded, volunteer Waterloo citizens were needed to date records back to 1895 according to *The Cooperative Weather Observer*. One of those observers was Ralph Bethuel Slippy.

Mr. Slippy was born on January 21, 1881, the son of William A. and Minnie J. (Young) Slippy in Reinbeck, Iowa. He would receive a Bachelor degree and professional degree in civil engineering from Cornell College in 1903 and 1905, respectively. In 1903, Mr. Slippy married to Georgiana Vine Newton. While not known in public records or available documentation for certain, Georgiana's father, M. L. Newton, and Mr. Slippy both worked at the Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Northern Railroad Company. This is perhaps how the couple met and also may have been how Mr. Slippy learned of his father-in-law's weather observing duties for the U.S. Weather Bureau. *(continued on next page)*



Cover of *The Cooperative Weather Observer*

(continued from previous page) In addition to working for the railroad, Mr. Slippy also held at one time or another professional positions as an instructor at the University of Illinois, president of the Waterloo Stone and Gravel Company, Waterloo city engineer, and started the Ralph B. Slippy Engineering Corporation. Beyond work as a civil engineer, Mr. Slippy had political aspirations, perhaps spurred by his father who was the mayor of Reinbeck for one term. From around 1936 to around 1946, Mr. Slippy was the mayor of Waterloo. He also ran unsuccessfully in the 1952 Iowa primary elections as a Lieutenant Governor candidate. Mr. Slippy was also involved in the Iowa Engineering Society, Mason Lodge, Isaac Walton League, Kiwanis, the Methodist Church, and served on the Iowa Centennial Committee.

When Mr. Slippy's father-in-law passed away in January 1911, he took over weather observations that his father-in-law began in 1895. Mr. Slippy continued to take detailed observations, recording the records shown at right during his tenure. To this day, all but the record low stand as current records at Waterloo.

#### Waterloo, Iowa Records - January 1911 - March 1950

Record High	112°F	July 13 and 14, 1936
Record Low	-33°F	January 22, 1930
24 hour rainfall	6.00"	September 8, 1941
24 hour snowfall	14.0"	November 30, 1934

Mr. Slippy's duty of taking official weather observation for Waterloo ended in March 1950. That was when the Waterloo Airport Station was successfully established and began taking the Waterloo observation. Little is known after this time about Mr. Slippy, who died in 1960.

#### References

Drennen, L. W. (ca. 1938). Iowa Official Register 1937-1938. State of Iowa.

Hartman, J. C. (1915.). History of Black Hawk County, Iowa, and its People (Volume 2).

Synhorst, M. D. (1952). Primary Candidate for State and District Offices.

<https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/results/50s/1952primcan ds.pdf>

United States Weather Bureau (1951). The cooperative weather observer: who he is and where he serves. U.S. Government Printing Office.

Who's Who in Iowa; A Biographical Record of Iowa's Leaders in Business, Professional and Public Life. (1940). Iowa Press Association.

WB Form 4303 A  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, WEATHER BUREAU  
REPORT ON SUBSTATION

Substation Waterloo County Black Hawk State Iowa  
Station number        Latitude 42°31' N. Longitude 92°20' W.  
(Punch card code)  
Section        Township        Range        Elevation 849  
(Feet, m.s.l.)  
Equipment is located at 717 Fairview Ave. which is within        city or town limits  
(Street address, R.R., name, Highway No., etc.) (Within or outside)  
Location is 1 1/2 miles NW of Post Office at Waterloo, Iowa  
(Address, distance and direction) (City or town)  
Weather Bureau services rendered at this substation Climatological, Special Service  
(List service designations: River, crop, hydrological, etc.)  
Reporting to Des Moines, Iowa  
Instrumental equipment in use Maximum and minimum thermometers, 8" rain gage  
(List equipment; indicate ownership if not Weather Bureau)  
Serial numbers of weighing type recording rain gage        (Weather Bureau No.) (Manufacturer's No.)  
Hour of observation 7 PM for records; 7 AM for Special Service Time zone 90th M.  
Reports: Means of communication telegraph Sent to WFO, Des Moines, Ia.  
(Telephone, phone, radio, mail, etc.)  
Data included Temperature and precip. Reporting criteria daily  
(Temperature, precipitation, river stage, etc.) (Daily, weekly, 10 day, etc.)  
Charts No.        Record forms No. 1009-48 Mailed to Des Moines, Iowa  
Record published Climatological Data  
(Indicate data published and in which bulletin)  
Observer Ralph B. Slippy  
Address: Mail Waterloo, Iowa Freight         
OCCASION FOR THIS REPORT  
☐ 1. Establishment of station ☐ 2. Relocation of equipment ☒ 3. Discontinuance of station  
☐ 4. Publication of record, from station operated or supervised by         
(Name of agency or individual)  
☐ 5.         
Remarks: Mr. Slippy resigned, effective March 1, 1950. Information for Special Service and for Climatological Data available for Waterloo Airport Station, established November 22, 1942 and now operating satisfactorily.  
March 1, 1950 C. E. Lamoureux March 1, 1950  
(Effective Date) (Name of person preparing this report) (Date prepared)  
Original mailed to C. O. copies to XXXXXXWRFC, KC; SC;  
(Office) (Date)  
(WB-6-50-40-10M) 51

U.S. Weather Bureau report showing the discontinuance of the Waterloo observing site as the Waterloo Airport Station was operating satisfactorily.



# November 29th Wintry System

Ashley Bury, Meteorologist

A large system brought a mix of wintry precipitation across portions of northwestern and central Iowa on Tuesday November 29th. Temperatures during the day varied greatly across the state in the 20s northwest and into the low 60s southeast. Precipitation started in northwest Iowa in the morning, expanding towards central Iowa by midday. While precipitation began as rain or freezing drizzle, as temperatures dropped it quickly transitioned to snow over northwestern Iowa. Snow accumulations over northwest Iowa were generally between 1-3 inches with some locations closer to the Iowa/Minnesota border receiving up to 6 inches. Further southeast into the Des Moines metro and surrounding areas, temperatures fell below freezing in the afternoon as the front passed through, though little to no ice accumulated. Slippery conditions across the affected areas caused a handful of accidents on the roadways through the morning and afternoon. By the evening, conditions dried out from west to east, though partially covered roadways continued to cause some travel impacts in northwestern Iowa into Wednesday morning.



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Allan Curtis

*Outreach, Event Support/IDSS, Partner Engagement, Climate, Severe Weather*

### Background

Allan grew up in Ralston, NE, an Omaha suburb, and always enjoyed a good thunderstorm, though the event that solidified his interest in meteorology was a winter storm, the infamous October 1997 winter storm that dramatically impacted Omaha. He studied at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, then working as a Service Climatologist for the Midwestern Regional Climate Center at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign for 3 years before entering the NWS in 2014 at the Des Moines office.

Here, he has participated in regional and national projects ranging from climate outlooks, culture, and product testbeds. He recently concluded a multi-year leadership program and is an active member in the local National Weather Association chapter and planning member for its annual conference.

Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his wife and young son, Nebraska/Husker sports, traveling all over, cooking and grilling, and being social.



Meteorologist



8 Years of Service

On the Cover:

On November 10th, 2022 a strong cold front dropped temperatures over 40 degrees in a single day. While cold, it also resulted in gorgeous sunsets and even rainbows across the state that evening. The image is from the NWS Des Moines "backyard" on the evening of Nov. 10th.



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